vide notification dated 1.3.2002. However, this exemption was withdrawn by the Government and full excise duty @ 16% on Naphtha was re-imposed on these Naphtha based power plants in two phases *i.e.* with effect from 1.4.2005 and 2.7.2005. Both international and domestic prices of Naphtha have increased after re-imposing of excise duty of Naphtha for Naphtha based power plants.

(d) and (e) At present there is no proposal for exempting Naphtha from excise duty.

Oil exploration in Rajasthan

2363. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of places where oil exploration is taking place in Rajasthan;

(b) the stages of progress of such exploration and potential thereof;

(c) whether a refinery is likely to be set up in Rajasthan and the role of ONGC therein;

(d) if so, its road-map and the details thereof;

(e) what would be the share of State/Centre in royalty; and

(f) whether any proposal from the State is pending with the Centre in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) Exploration work in 10 (ten) blocks is being carried out in the districts of Ganganagar, Barmer, Jalore, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Churu, Kota, Jhalwarand Jodhpur. Besides, 5 (five) more blocks have been recently awarded in Rajasthan and contracts for these were signed on 02.03.2006.

(b) Blocks are under various stages of exploration and development.

(c) The proposal for setting up a refinery at Barmer in Rajasthan is under the consideration of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)/Mangalore Refinery and Petro-chemicals Limited (MRPL), a subsidiary of ONGC.

(d) ONGC/MRPL has reported that the economic viability of the high investment requires fiscal incentives and other benefits from the Government of Rajasthan, are required ONGC/MRPL have requested the State Government to consider the required fiscal incentives and support for the viability of huge investments in the Well-head Refinery Project. On receipt of a favourable consideration of the incentive package and other support from the Government of Rajasthan, ONGC/MRPL would be able to draw the road map for development of the Refinery.

(e) and (f) As per Oilfields (Regulation & Development) Act, 1948, royalty on oil & gas production from onland areas is paid to the respective State Governments only.

Fall in prices of petroleum products

†2364. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of petroleum products have reduced in the international market;

(b) if so, what is the percentage of reduction in the prices; and

(c) whether the reduction done in the prices of petrol and diesel in India in past few days is proportionate to the fall in their prices in the international market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) Global prices of crude oil and petroleum products since 2004 have remained high and volatile. During 2006-07, international prices of Indian Basket of crude oil reached $75.20 per barrel on 8/8/06 and thereafter declined to $59.15 per barrel on 12/3/07. The International prices of crude oil and petroleum products softened from September '06 onwards. During August '06 to February '07, the prices of petrol, diesel, kerosene and LPG have declined by 18.2%, 17.8%, 19.6% and 3.8% respectively. The trend in the international prices of petroleum products since April '06 is given in the Statement. (See below)

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.